

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:EGABINGTON:CF

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON

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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 190470

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IR, US

SUBJECT: HUMPHREY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ON U.S.-IRAN ARMS
RELATIONSHIP

1. THE HUMPHREY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ON OUR MILITARY SALES
PROGRAM WITH IRAN IS DUE TO BE PUBLISHED MONDAY, AUGUST 2.
I ANTICIPATE THAT THERE WILL BE SOME PRESS INTEREST IN IT.
THE REPORT WILL HAVE SOME POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY
BUT WILL ALSO CONTAIN SOME CRITICAL ELEMENTS.
LATTER WILL OBVIOUSLY NOT SIT TOO WELL WITH IRANIANS. NAAS
HAS READ REPORT AND HE CAN BRIEF YOU IN DETAIL ON ITS
CONTENTS.

2. IN ATTEMPT TO MITIGATE ANY CRITICAL PUBLIC IMPACT AS A
RESULT OF REPORT, WE ARE MAKING FOLLOWING AVAILABLE TO
PRESS.

3. BEGIN TEXT: THE REPORT RAISES A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT
OUR ARMS POLICY TOWARD IRAN WHICH NEED CLARIFICATION AND
TO BE PLACED IN CONTEXT. UNTIL 1969 IRAN WAS LARGELY
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DEPENDENT ON US FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE THROUGH GRANT AID

OR LOANS. GRANT AID WAS TERMINATED IN 1969 BECAUSE OF IRAN'S STEADILY IMPROVING ECONOMY. BY 1972, WHEN PRESIDENT

NIXON MADE HIS VISIT TO TEHRAN, IRAN, FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES, WAS ABLE TO BEGIN A PROGRAM OF MILITARY MODERNIZATION FROM WHATEVER SOURCES IT DESIRED. (YOU WILL NOTE THAT OUR GRANT AID AND CREDITS CONSTITUTED A VERY MODEST PROGRAM OVER 20 YEARS.) THE PRESIDENT BELIEVED THAT IT WAS IN U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS TO HAVE IRAN TURN TO THE UNITED STATES AS THE PRINCIPAL SOURCE OF ITS MILITARY PURCHASES. THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE REPORT MAKES THE POINT: IRAN WILL REMAIN AN "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT COUNTRY" TO THE UNITED STATES FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

4. THEREFORE, PRESIDENT NIXON IN 1972 DID AGREE THAT IRAN COULD PURCHASE THE F-14 OR F-15 AND THAT IRAN SHOULD HAVE INCREASED ACCESS TO U.S. ARMS. THESE DECISIONS, HOWEVER, MUST BE SEEN IN A LARGER CONTEXT.

5. THE PRESIDENT AT GUAM IN 1969 STATED THAT HENCEFORTH THE U.S. WOULD EXPECT REGIONAL COUNTRIES TO ASSUME GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR AREA DEFENSE AND THAT THE U.S. WOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH SUCH COUNTRIES. ALSO, IN THE LATE '60'S, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE U.K. WOULD WITHDRAW ITS FORCES FROM THE PERSIAN GULF AND THEREBY END ITS SECURITY AND STABILIZING ROLE. THE U.S. CERTAINLY WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO REPLACE BRITISH POWER IN THIS VITAL AREA. WE CONCLUDED THAT ONLY THE REGIONAL COUNTRIES--PARTICULARLY IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA--COULD TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR REGIONAL SECURITY, AND THAT THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT THEY FACE, AND THEIR JUDGMENT OF WHAT THEY NEEDED TO DO THE JOB, MUST BE GIVEN SERIOUS WEIGHT IN RESPONDING TO THEIR ARMS REQUESTS. THIS WAS THE CONTEXT OF OUR DECISION.

6. IRAN, A PARTICULARLY CLOSE AND RELIABLE FRIEND FOR 30 YEARS, IS IN A KEY AND DIFFICULT STRATEGIC SITUATION. IT IS A LARGE COUNTRY, WITH A LONG TRADITION OF INDEPENDENCE --INTENT ON BEING ABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF. IT PURSUES POLICIES IN MANY AREAS CONGRUENT WITH AND SUPPORTIVE OF OUR OWN. IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT WE WOULD HELP.

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7. AS TO THE STATEMENT THAT THIS ARMS SALES POLICY WAS NEVER FORMALLY REVIEWED--IN SPITE OF IRAN'S AND SAUDI ARABIA'S GREATLY INCREASED INCOME--WE ARE UNCLEAR AS TO THE MEANING- ALL POLICIES ARE, IN THE PROCESS OF SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS, CONTINUALLY UNDER REVIEW, WHETHER OR NOT NEW FORMAL POLICY PAPERS ARE PREPARED. EACH PURCHASE WAS REVIEWED AND A NUMBER WERE BROUGHT TO THE

ATTENTION OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT WITH PROS
AND CONS AND OPTIONS. THIS IS, IN PRACTICE, POLICY REVIEW.

8. WITH RESPECT TO THE STATEMENTS CONCERNING MANAGERIAL
PROBLEMS, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ANY SUCH LARGE PROGRAM WILL
HAVE SUCH PROBLEMS. OUR OWN SERVICES HAVE THEM. WE
RECOGNIZED THESE PROBLEMS LAST YEAR AND SENT A SENIOR,
HIGHLY CAPABLE DOD CIVILIAN WITH A STAFF OF SPECIALISTS
TO DIG INTO THEM. THESE MATTERS ARE MUCH BETTER NOW BUT,
OF COURSE, THERE WILL BE PROBLEMS IN THE FUTURE. END TEXT.
KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, TEXT, US CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, MILITARY SALES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE190470
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EGABINGTON:CF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760296-1097
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760898/aaaadiba.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2004 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HUMPHREY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT ON U.S.-IRAN ARMS RELATIONSHIP
TAGS: PFOR, IR, US
To: TEHRAN
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006